**Libyan Rebels Clarify Steps to New Rule**

**By** [**KAREEM FAHIM**](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/f/kareem_fahim/index.html?inline=nyt-per) **and RICK GLADSTONE**

TRIPOLI, Libya — Libya’s provisional leaders said Monday that they would resign once the former rebels defeat the vestiges of armed support for Col. [Muammar el-Qaddafi](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/q/muammar_el_qaddafi/index.html?inline=nyt-per) in his home city of Surt, a move that would clear the way for a new interim government that would run the country until elections can be held.

The announcement signaled that the Transitional National Council, as the provisional government is known, had had to revise its version of victory in the eight-month conflict against Colonel Qaddafi, who fled underground in late August when the anti-Qaddafi forces overran Tripoli. Previously, officials with the council had said they would not declare the conflict to be officially over until the country was completely pacified and Colonel Qaddafi and his top aides were either arrested, killed or confirmed to be out of the country.

The whereabouts of Colonel Qaddafi and two of his most influential sons, Seif al-Islam and Muatassim, remain unclear.

The shift by the interim government on Monday reflected growing criticism of the caretaker government for not representing all of Libya and impatience with the pace of change in a country that still feels as if it is at war. The announcement put elections, scheduled for eight months after the naming of an interim government, within sight.

Some progress has been made in efforts by anti-Qaddafi fighters to advance into Surt, council officials said on Monday, but there was no immediate indication of a decisive turn in the contested city. Aid officials have warned of an unfolding humanitarian emergency. A Red Cross convoy trying to deliver aid was forced back on Monday after the former rebels started shelling the city, Reuters reported.

Local officials also moved on Monday to try to assuage the residents of Tripoli, who have complained about the dozens of armed militias that continue to patrol the streets and guard government installations. These include many militias from the Nafusah Mountains who have so far refused requests to leave Tripoli, the capital, leading to clashes in recent days between the city’s own militias and the fighters from other regions.

At a chaotic press conference, the head of the Tripoli Military Council, Abdel Hakim Belhaj, said the city’s residents were “frightened,” and he appealed for calm and for the militias to disarm until the transitional leaders could form a national army and ministries to supervise security.

“This press conference is the will of the citizens of Tripoli,” Mr. Belhaj said. “We demand an end to the uncontrolled arms that have started to be seen clearly on the streets.”

Officials referred to plans to secure the city without the aid of militias, but they did not provide details. Mr. Belhaj, a former leader of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group who commands his own fighters, said he was authorized by the Transitional National Council to curb the spread of heavy weapons.

The proposed changes to the government were announced by the head of the council, Mustafa Abdel-Jalil, and the temporary prime minister, [Mahmoud Jibril](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/j/mahmoud_jibril/index.html?inline=nyt-per), at a news conference in the eastern city of Benghazi, where the armed uprising against Colonel Qaddafi took root in February.

Both men had said previously that they intended to relinquish their posts, but their statements on Monday offered more specifics about the timing.

Mr. Jibril, [who has become a focus of much of the criticism](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/26/world/africa/rivalries-impede-government-formation-in-libya.html) of the provisional government, added the foreign ministry to his portfolio. Mr. Abdel-Jalil also announced the creation of a ministry responsible for dealing with victims of the conflict.

He said that that within a month after Surt was captured, a new interim government would be named. He also was quoted as saying that he and Mr. Jibril had pledged to “not take part in any future government in any way.”

*Kareem Fahim reported from Tripoli, and Rick Gladstone from New York.*